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Library in New York as well as those of the Cleveland Museum of Art, where he arranged and catalogued the Inaugural Loan Collection of 1916.

Mr. Bell has traveled extensively in Europe, including Russia, as well as in the Far East. Also in this country, he has visited and studied the principal museums and has familiarized himself with their collections.

His training as an architect should prove especially valuable at this time when the question of erecting new art buildings and galleries is under discussion in this city and many problems structural and of the heating and especially of the lighting of museum buildings and picture galleries must be earnestly studied with a view to producing the best results.

One of the most serious disadvantages under which a group of people about to erect a museum building labor is that there is hardly any architect who has built a museum. If there is, he seldom is employed again because he is judged by his mistakes rather than by his achievements. This, of course, is an error of judgment. Practice makes perfect. The architect who has made a mistake is not likely to repeat it. He probably has studied that particular point diligently ever since and one stands a far better chance to work out the ideal museum with a man who has had previous experience of the peculiar necessities of museum work than with a new man whose head is full of daring experiments which he is eager to try at your expense. There are very few museums that are soul-satisfying to the individual who has to work in them. That individual usually is the least thought of, general effects being usually the paramount requisite of the committees in charge.

It seems to me, therefore, that a director who also is architect and can authoritatively assert his needs and the practical possibility of meeting them, must be invaluable as an addition to any building committee.

This and much more, as time goes on, we are discovering Mr. Bell to be—and the Museum authorities, therefore, are to be congratulated in having, in their hour of need, secured the presence at the helm of so valuable a Director.

S. Y. S.



A CHINESE CARPET. LENT BY A FRIEND OF THE MUSEUM

Fortunately for the student of Chinese Art, we can be reasonably certain that no carpets woven in that country prior to the great Ming Dynasty (1368 to 1643 A. D.) are likely to be presented for our consideration. Whether or no the few pieces preserved in the Japanese Imperial Treasury, the Shōsōin of Todaiji in Nara, are of Chinese origin and of the early date, posterior to which no objects are said to have been added to the treasure, is for us a matter of small importance.

Those highly prized textiles are never likely to leave their far-eastern home and none like them have been or are ever likely to be, found elsewhere.

Consequently we are safe in saying that no rugs earlier than Ming are extant and indeed but few that can safely be ascribed to that dynasty.

The style of this period, design, colouring and even the material and weave are very clearly marked; one authority states that cotton was never used for the warp threads in Ming times, but only wool. In this era, too, seems to have originated the fashion of weaving gold and silver threads into the backgrounds of carpets and it is said that the method spread from China to Persia, where it appears in the famous so-called "Polish" carpets, with metal grounds.

There seems to be no method of ascertaining how far into the subsequent Ts'ing Dynasty the Ming manner prevailed. It could not have been very long however, since in 1662 the great Emperor K'ang Hsi came to the throne and to his time are ascribed the finest existing specimens of Chinese carpets. This is more than probably true, since in other arts his reign shows the high water-mark of achievement, at least in the esteem of the Western connoisseur. The strength and severity of Ming was still dominant and the love for mere beauty had not yet weakened it to effeminacy, as it did in the reign of his grandson Ch'en Lung (1736 to 1796 A. D.)

The K'ang Hsi weavers chose their materials and colours and wove them with such care, that technically their rugs are the best that have come to us from China.

The Ch'ien Lung carpets are those which show a lovely variety of peach colour and rose and in every way recall the extravagant revel in colour of the porcelains of the same period. Nevertheless they show us also a noble reserve in the simple and often very severe rugs of blue and white alone.

After this emperor's death rug weaving, with the other arts, fell into decay and very few carpets of the end of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries have any great artistic value.

According to Mr. Frederick Moore, who has devoted many years to the study of the subject, in China, the weaving of fine rugs was done in the interior, away from the treaty ports; they were never woven in the south. The weavers were almost exclusively Mohammedans of Kansu, Shansi and Shensi, the provinces that border Mongolia. K'ang Hsi and Ch'ien Lung, he says, seem to have brought weavers as well as artists from beyond the western borders of their empire, which later rulers did not.

The inspiration of the technical side of the art having come from the mother-land of carpets, Persia, it is interesting to note that, in this as in so many other cases, the Chinese should have absorbed the invader and Sinified him.

Much, perhaps too much, stress has been laid on the inner meaning of the patterns of Persian carpets and while it is no doubt true that the tree of life and other ancient symbols may be traced in them, by a stretch of the imagination, yet it seems to me in the highest degree doubtful that these symbols were used with definite intent by the weavers of Persian rugs. Their object was a beautiful pattern. With the Chinese this is not so. What better example can we desire than the carpet before us? There is no attempt at a pattern. Except in the border, no design even, all is subjected to the purpose of including as many symbolic objects to make the result of happy augury.

Carpets were used in China chiefly as coverings for the *Kong*, which is a sort of divan, often fifteen to twenty feet long, built into the house and often with a stove contrived under it; on it the inmates sit and sleep. Only

in temples and palaces are carpets used on the floors and in both of these it is customary to remove the shoes.

Smaller rugs were made for saddle cloths and bags; the latter are often brought to this country with the pockets, of another material, still sewn inside either end; when filled they were flung over the saddle-bow or carried by the pedestrian traveller over his shoulders; on arriving at an inn they were emptied and spread on the *Kong* in his room to serve as his bed. Squares were also made for priests to kneel on during the long drawn out services in the temples.

Carpets were also used as door curtains, particularly in temples; those covered with religious symbols must have been made for such a use. The most curious use to which carpets were ever put and one which seems peculiar to China, though it may have also prevailed in ancient Persia and Babylonia, is that of pillar coverings. A common decoration of columns in Chinese temples and palaces is an enormous dragon twined round the post; these are usually carved, but many carpets exist which were woven for this purpose, mostly with the dragon design, but often with other religious emblems and even with pictures of the divinities to whom the temple was dedicated.

Chinese carpets, even fine specimens, are often found cut into pieces, this is the result of the splitting up of a family, when all the inherited possessions are divided with meticulous exactitude.

This carpet is 12 feet long by 5 feet 10 inches wide, woven of fine silky wool on a cotton warp. The ground colour is a gray fawn on which the designs appear in a paler shade of the same, which was once almost cream-white and in two tones of indigo blue, no other colour being used.

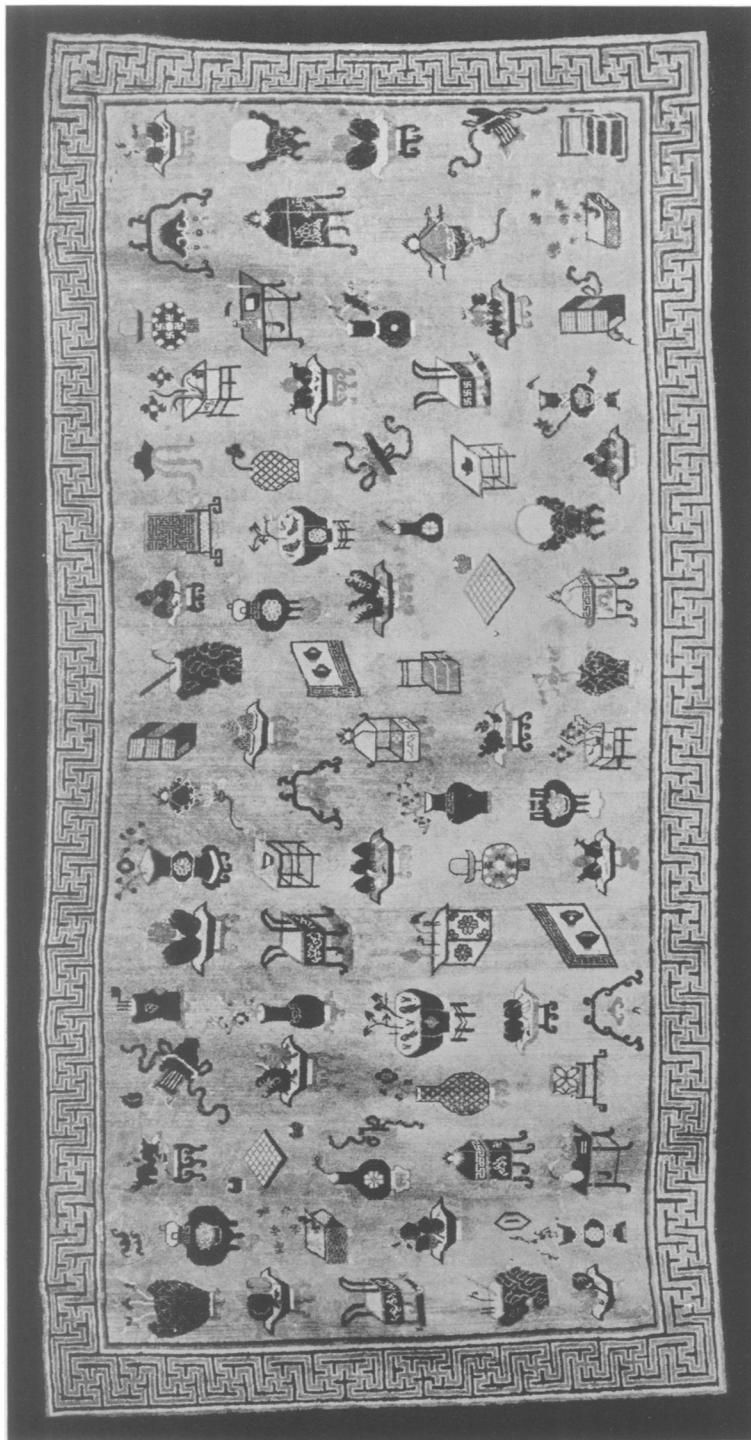
The border is a swastika-fret in the paler blue, edged with cream colour, on a dark blue ground; the skill with which this is planned to fill the space, starting correctly from every corner is notable; such care is always the mark of a first-class piece of work. This fret, which used to be known as the Greek meander, is now recognized as of common occurrence in the arts of many lands. By Chinese archæologists it is called the cloud and thunder pattern. When it is based or centred on the swastika (also an universal pattern) it is differentiated by that name. In China the swastika is called *wan* and is used as a symbol for ten thousand; this like myriad, thousand or even hundred merely denotes a large, uncounted, number.

The design of this carpet is that known to Chinese scholars as "The hundred antiques," but even here, where more of them than usual appear, there are no more than seventy-nine, scattered assymetrically over the field, some of them being repeated more than once, though not slavishly.

As has been suggested, the motives of Chinese decorative art are almost entirely symbolic. The oldest of these are the *Pa Kua* or eight Trigrams, groups of three bars of varying length and arrangement, which stand for the forces of nature. There are eight Buddhist symbols and eight Taoist, eight musical instruments, eight precious objects, seven gems, five blessings, four emblems of the elegant accomplishments of the scholar, besides many others, single and in groups; any selection from these seems to be known as the hundred antiques.

A favorite use of them is to combine two or more, so that their names form a rebus, the language lending itself readily to this form of play upon words,

CHINESE CARPET



since one sound has many meanings, the difference between these being conveyed in speaking by the tones. Dr. B. Laufer, in "Jade," has shown that the use of the rebus was highly popular in the T'ang era (618 to 960 A. D.). It may have been in use earlier, since even the earliest examples of Chinese art known to us are full of symbolism.

Among those in this carpet some are readily to be read, others are more obscure, this will appear in the course of the description. Of the emblems I have enumerated, the Trigrams and the eight musical instruments seem to be absent, as are most of the Buddhist and all the Taoist attributes of the eight immortals, the eight precious objects and the seven gems.

The gong, hanging from its frame, may stand for the bell, the two fish, shown here in a bowl, the canopy or umbrella and one or others of the vases, may all have a Buddhist significance, though I do not feel very sure of this. The fish certainly refer also to a propitious marriage, *Yi* fish meaning also abundance.

All the symbols of the four elegant accomplishments of a scholar are here; the board for playing *go* with the two round boxes or bowls for holding the black and white men, the two scrolls of painting, the books of writing and the *Ch'in* or Chinese harp, partly withdrawn from its bag. These and a few other objects are tied with fillets or ribbons. This addition is said to represent the divine emanation from any person or thing peculiarly sacred, somewhat as does an aureole. It is, as is well known, commonly throughout Asia attached to any sacred object. Knots have also a mystic or sacred significance.

The coral branches in a bowl are a badge of rank and imperial favor as is the *ju* or cloud headed sceptre. The writing table with its furnishings is another allusion to the scholarship of the owner of the rug, as are the incense burners and jars containing the implements used with them. The mirror in its stand, also repeated more than once, is of good omen, since it is believed to ward off evil spirits.

The greater number of the objects on the carpet are of auspicious omen. The vats *fu* are a rebus for happiness *fu*. A table screen bears the character *wan*, in an ornamental form, this as has been said means ten thousand, signifying, in this place, happiness without end. The two peaches symbolize longevity and sometimes conjugal felicity; the two cups on trays probably also refer to the marriage ceremony; the pomegranate *Kiat* is a rebus for luck, *Kiat*; the Finger citron or Buddha's hand, a sort of orange, *Kek* implies auspicious, *Kek*. These three fruits, *San Kuo*, Peach, Pomegranate and Finger citron, together, mean Abundance of Years, Sons and Happiness.

The profusion of flowers is also a good omen. Altogether we may assume this rug to have been a gift to a scholar of high rank who was, or was about to be, happily married.

The owner of this carpet, who has far greater knowledge of the art of the Far East than the writer of this paper can pretend to, states that it was called Ch'ien Lung, but thinks it may be earlier. In this opinion I agree.

H. B.